

Santa Barbara City Council Subcommittee on Homelessness and Community Relations
October 22, 2008
1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

David Gebhard Public Meeting Room
630 Garden Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
Minutes

Topic - Utilization of existing shelter services to more effectively assist the most vulnerable homeless persons

Council Members Present: Iya Falcone, Dale Francisco, Helene Schneider

Staff Present: Frank Mannix, Sue Gray, Steve Wiley, Don Olson, Dave Gustafson, Rich Glaus

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JULY 10, 2008, AUGUST 6, 2008, AUGUST 29, 2008, SEPTEMBER 11, 2008 AND OCTOBER 2, 2008

The minutes of July 10, 2008, August 6, 2008, August 29, 2008, September 11, 2008 and October 2, 2008 were approved as submitted (M-Schneider/S-Francisco).

2. FOLLOW-UP FROM OCTOBER 2ND MEETNG, Frank Mannix, S.B. Police Department and Roger Heroux, Bringing Our Community Home

Captain Mannix gave a brief summary of the October 2nd subcommittee meeting, stressing that they are focusing on changing behavior utilizing prosecutorial leverage. To do this, they have developed two strategies: the Top 10 Offender list and the Zone Enforcement program. Roger Heroux described a strategy to help reduce the number of chronically homeless individuals by utilizing non-profit service providers and public entities that come into contact with them. The strategy would organize the current street outreach teams to help them identify individuals on the Police Department's top 100 offender list for open containers (many are most likely chronically homeless) and find out what services they are currently receiving, whose system they are already in, who's responsible for case management and what services they need. Individuals on this list may be engaged by 5 – 6 different entities. The strategy is that one person needs to take responsibility for the case management and coordination of services for each person. There is an outreach task group meeting tomorrow and the outreach workers will be asked to decide who on the list of 100 can be most successful right now and at what level. Engaging those on the list one at a time can result in a significant dent in the problem over time.

3. CURRENT SHELTER CAPACITY – Sue Gray, Community Development Department

Sue Gray described a chart of the homeless shelters/housing capacity in the City of Santa Barbara (see attachment). From December through March there are 916 total beds/units in the City. These consist of the following: 385 emergency beds; 42 emergency RV spaces; 98 transitional units/room; 167 transitional beds; and 224

permanent units/rooms/spaces. From April through November the total number drops to 816 due to Casa Esperanza's conditional use permit which only allows for 100 year-round beds. During this time period, there are 185 emergency beds; 42 RV spaces; 98 transitional units/rooms; 267 transitional beds and 224 permanent units/rooms/spaces. The chart also indicates the amount of City funding that has been provided for each individual project over the past 17 years. The total support for current projects is over \$18.5 million. The City is also providing approximately \$13.5 million more for projects in the pipeline. These figures include only City support for affordable housing projects serving the homeless or formerly homeless.

4. **CURRENT SHELTER USAGE – Casa Esperanza, Rescue Mission, Salvation Army, Transition House, Domestic Violence Solutions, Noah's Anchorage, WillBridge**

Mike Foley, Casa Esperanza, reported an increase of intakes this year compared to last year. In September 2007 they conducted 64 intakes, of which 17 reported their last residence as Santa Barbara. In September 2008, they conducted 138 intakes, and 70 reported their last residence as Santa Barbara. He also reported that they have been full to capacity since the winter shelter closed in March and 5 – 10 individuals that qualified for their transitional housing program were turned away in the last month due to their conditional use permit restriction. These included persons with disabilities, women, and individuals with medical problems.

John Gabbert, Rescue Mission, reported that their emergency shelter capacity is 85 (65 men and 20 women). He stated that in the last two weeks they have averaged 110 in the shelter (they have the ability to put up cots). He also reported that they usually average 75 – 80 for meals, but have had an average of 120 in the last two weeks. He said that this may be due, in part, to a change in their requirements as they no longer require people to attend chapel services.

Beverly Engel, Domestic Violence Solutions, reported that their 21-bed emergency shelter for battered women and their children is currently full. Their average daily count is between 15 – 21. Women can stay up to 45 days. They also have transitional units where women can stay up to 18 months.

Kathleen Baushke, Transition House, reported that their capacity is 70 and they have been full since April 2007. 128 families have been turned away in the last 12 months. Of these, 34 eventually got in to the shelter; which means that they could not provide help to 94 families this past year. She also stated that family homelessness is at a crisis point and homeless service providers have become instruments of broader social issues (i.e. housing, work). Her organization is talking with other shelter providers regarding ways to deal with this increase. She also stated that 90% of their clients come from Santa Barbara County.

Mark Watson, Noah's Anchorage, reported that they are on par with their service numbers over the past 5 years. Their numbers regularly dip in the summer months. They currently have 4 – 5 youth staying at their 8-bed shelter. They serve youth aged 10 – 17 in their residential shelter and youth aged 10 – 24 in their street outreach program. He reported that they have received a renewal grant for their outreach workers, which is good news because they didn't have this funding last year.

Jack Clitheroe, Salvation Army, reported that they have 65 transitional housing clean and sober beds. Their goal is to help people get back into mainstream society. He stated that their organization is further up the recovery continuum and they wouldn't be appropriate for immediate shelter for those on the 100-offender list. They also expand to serve an additional 40 people during inclement weather (25 men and 15 women). He also stated that they tried to expand two years ago but were told by the City that they couldn't get through the process in time to meet their \$1.5 funding grant 2-year spending period. They have the possibility to try this again with the same funding source.

Lynnelle Williams, WillBridge, reported that they are a safe haven 12-bed transitional housing program for persons with mental illness. Two of the 12 beds are for emergency medical respite. 30% of their clients go on to permanent housing; 30% go to residential treatment; 17% go to Board and Care facilities; and 4% are reunified with their families. They receive referrals from Probation and County Mental Health. They have been operating at capacity and are trying to secure a second location so they can double their capacity. They originally thought the length of stay would be 6 - 8 months, but they are finding that it is closer to 3 years.

Jill Wallerstat, St. Brigid's Fellowship, reported for New Beginnings RV Safe Parking Program. She reported that there are currently 35 people on the waiting list and they place women and families with children first.

Responding to a question regarding relocation, Beverly Engel stated that at the end of 18 months, women in her program are encouraged to leave Santa Barbara if they haven't been able to find suitable housing; however many have their support system here (schools, jobs, etc) and are afraid to leave. Kathleen Bauske also reported that they encourage those who can to relocate to less expensive areas; however many people in shelters do not have the resources to do so.

5. INPUT FROM COMMUNITY

Councilmember Falcone asked the public to comment on how they feel about increased capacity utilizing existing shelters and opportunities for expansion, including expansion of the Casa Esperanza shelter.

Comments were as follows:

- Need to expand shelters because things are getting worse and not everyone fits into the current slots.
- We are going in the right direction – outreach and collaboration is good – would like to see more shelter collaboration.
- Need cross communication among shelters regarding vacancies.
- Need to focus on 100 empty beds at Casa Esperanza; the community may feel more comfortable if the focus is on the elderly or ill because they would have minimal impact on the neighborhood.
- Need to look at finances of Casa Esperanza and Rescue Mission. They both average \$1.5 million in revenue, which equal about \$10,000 per bed. They also need to focus on infrastructure deterioration.

- There continue to be neighborhood issues surrounding Casa Esperanza so it's hard to support increasing the bed capacity. 50 – 100 beds would have a significant impact on the neighborhood. Need to look at a relocation fund for those willing and able to relocate. Area around shelter needs increased police presence. 100% of blame cannot be put on Casa Esperanza as some neighborhood impacts may be related to soup kitchen as many people come to eat then leave without receiving any other services offered on site.
- Home is where people live or hang out.
- It is a complex issue and there is no silver bullet. \$28 a day for shelter at Casa Esperanza is a reasonable cost and well under the costs of people living on the streets. The Police Department has a list of 100 people with alcohol abuse, drug abuse and/or mental illness. If the top 10 or 20 on the list are ready and willing to deal with their issues and could go to Casa Esperanza and participate in a recovery program, wouldn't that be a viable use of the empty beds? There are currently on 12 detox beds on the South Coast. Other possible uses for the empty beds at Casa Esperanza are for women and children living on the street or in vehicles because the shelters are full and those needing medical attention. There are more homeless on the streets of America today than ever before. The City is to be commended for what has been done with housing and what is currently being done.
- This process should utilize the model being used to deal with youth violence. The energy from all youth providers was channeled to deal with 82 youth. Efforts dealing with subset populations of homeless individuals can be woven into this process.
- The bed per night cost for the Salvation Army's transitional program is approximately \$30 per day. By the time people get to this program they have already been detoxed and are ready to move on, so they are not the right place for people on the Police Department list. There needs to be the following to be successful: a stick, detox, treatment and housing.
- The current crisis should not result in building new beds; need to get people through shelter programs quickly and into housing. May need to pay their rent for a short time. Transition House, Good Samaritan and Lompoc Housing and Community Development Corp. have applied for a rapid re-housing grant from HUD which would help with this. Need to use available beds on a temporary basis.
- Need to think about March 31st. It's hard to ask 100 people to leave and go back to the streets. They have begun a women's self-defense program because so many women have been put back on the street.

Subcommittee member comments:

Councilmember Francisco asked people to look at the situation at Casa Esperanza a little differently; the community has 100 extra beds year round, not 100 less beds after the winter shelter closes. He stated that he is sensitive to Casa Esperanza's toll on the neighborhood and feels we need to distribute the impact. He sees a similarity with the youth violence task force and likes the focus on the top 100 offender list. He would like to look at the policies of each shelter and see if improvements can be made and beds freed up.

Councilmember Schneider commented that it was good to have this meeting at the end of the process. She thinks there needs to be better coordinated interaction with police calls for service and outreach teams. She also feels that enforcement won't work if the police are just citing and releasing people. She would also like to see a central data base between the shelters to deal with vacancies and use them more efficiently. She is not advocating for expanding the number of beds; however she questions the impact of an increase for medical beds and women and children. She thinks that some capital mitigation improvements in the area through Redevelopment Agency Funds may make it safer and more enforceable. She would like a package of issues to figure out what we are doing right and what we can do better.

Councilmember Falcone stated that she is thrilled with the participation of the shelter providers and asked if they could each give up a little bit of their territory so there would be a couple of places for the Police Department to take people or for hospitals to discharge patients. She would like any discussion of expansion to take a targeted approach for the most vulnerable populations: mental disabilities, women/children, suicidal teenagers; and detox/recovery. She feels the community would not have as much of a problem as they may with other populations of homeless.

6. DATE/TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Council Subcommittee on Homelessness and Community Relations will be held on November 13, 2008 from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. in the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room, 630 Garden Street. Another meeting is scheduled for December 18, 2008 from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon, also in the David Gebhard Public Meeting Room.

7. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

ATTENDEES

Roger Heroux, Bringing Our Community Home
Lori Crestfield, County Probation Department
Ralph Barbosa, County Public Health
Department
John G. Gabbert, Santa Barbara Rescue Mission
Mick Twomey, Salvation Army
Lynn Karlson, YMCA, Noah's Anchorage
Cleta Walker, Santa Barbara Conference and
Visitor's Bureau
Bill Collyer, Santa Barbara Downtown
Organization
Carol Crego, Amtrak
Monica Pisciotta, Amtrak
Lynnelle Williams, WillBridge
Imelda Loza, Casa Esperanza
Katy Bacchilega, Noah's Anchorage
Mark Watson, Noah's Anchorage
John Buttny, Bringing Our Community Home
Beverly Engel, Domestic Violence Solutions
Linda Miller, Homes on Wheels
Emily Roessler, Noah's Anchorage
Sue Adams, Casa Esperanza

Daniel r. Knapp, Client
Mitchell Sjerven, Santa Barbara Conference and
Visitor's Bureau
Isabel Blagborne, Council on Alcoholism and
Drug Abuse
Billy Goowin, Houseless Vet
John Dixon, Tri-County Produce
Jack Clitheroe, Salvation Army
Norma Kutzer, Self